

In Love and War

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Luke and Leia have a fight after ESB. I don't own these characters, George Lucas does, and please don't reprint without my permission. Feedback is appreciated. Thanks!

"Dammit!" Leia Organa shouted. She threw the error-filled report down on the table and began to rub her temples. 'Here it comes,' she thought with more than a little exasperation. 'I'm just not prepared to deal with him right now. Or anyone else, for that matter.'

He wasn't long in coming, just like all the other times. Of course, he played it off, acting very nonchalant. "Hey," Luke said, leaning on the doorframe. "Working hard?"

"It's these damn bureaucrats again. We're fighting a war here, not planning a picnic!"

"It's ok," he said in that manner of his that was so soothing, yet so grating of late. "Look, why don't you take a break and we'll go get something to drink."

Normally, she would have jumped at the chance. In the weeks following the horrors at Bespin, she and Luke had clung to each other desperately, each needing the other's comforting shadow. Lately though, she found herself drawing further and further away from him and others, from anyone who wasn't immediately concerned with finding Han. Everyone had let her go, knowing that she needed her space. Everyone, that is, but Luke. Anytime she was upset or angry, made any sort of emotional outburst, he was there, casually trying to take her mind off of it. She had thought nothing of it at first; she had even appreciated it. But now the boy was starting to hover worse than

Threepio did and it was getting more and more annoying. And it had to stop.

"You know what, Luke, I think I'll pass this time. I've got a lot of work to do, and-"

"Please? C'mon. You're not going to get anything done if you're frustrated."

"I'm not frustrated," she said carefully. "I just need to be alone right now."

"Look, Leia-"

"No, you look!" she shouted, slamming an open palm onto the table. His blue eyes opened wide, startled. "What don't you understand about 'need to be alone'? I don't want to see you right now! I don't want to see anyone. You can't keep hanging over me like a worried parent. I don't need you to worry about me!"

"Worry about you? Well, of course I'm worried! Look at you-you're not eating, you're not sleeping, you get angry at the drop of a hat-I'm just trying to help!"

"I don't need your help!"

"I can see that. I guess I forgot that her high and mighty highness is above showing emotion to the mere common person!"

He regretted it the moment it passed from his lips. Luke mentally kicked himself for losing control, especially now when they were both such a danger to themselves. But it was too late.

"I can't show emotion. I'm a figurehead. I'm supposed to be strong. You've seen what I've had to face, and let me tell you, it hasn't been too easy. It's called strength, not snobbery!"

"Oh, no," Luke said, angry now, the memory of betrayals, deaths and lies coming back strongly. "We're not going to play 'Who's Suffered More' now."

"We're not. But you haven't lost the person you loved more than anyone else in the universe!"

Luke was quiet for a moment, then he looked directly into her eyes. "Yes, I have. And now you're just being selfish. This isn't an issue that I want to cover anymore."

"You can't avoid it, Luke. What happened to you up there? You can't wander around moping and whimpering 'pity me, pity me' if you won't tell us why."

"I can't tell you what happened! I can't tell anyone. You wouldn't understand."

"Dammit, Luke! If what happened was so horrible, then how did you manage to survive? What did you give him to let you live? What's going on?" It was the wrong thing to say, and she knew it, but there was no undoing it now. You couldn't undo anything in life. She had learned that the hard way.

"You think something's going on? You really think that, don't you?" He sighed. "That's why I can't tell you what happened." Luke held her gaze for one moment longer, then turned and walked towards the door.

"What are you doing?" Leia asked.

"I'm leaving. There's nothing to keep me here." He turned back around. "Is there?"

Yes, yes, there is. But she couldn't say it. Couldn't bring herself to admit that she had been wrong. "Where will you go?"

"I don't know. I have nowhere. I'll just...I don't know." And it was true. He had nowhere to go. He couldn't return to Yoda yet, he couldn't go back to Tatooine; he couldn't go to Vader. He would find something somewhere.

"Luke..."

They turned and stared at each other. They were calling each other's bluffs and they knew it. Luke couldn't leave; Leia couldn't let him go. So they stared. Finally, Luke broke the silence, trying to relieve a bit of the tension.

"So this is why you and Han were always at odds. Neither of you could apologize."

"I guess I should learn, shouldn't I." Leia said softly.

"Leia, I-"

"No, let me start. I need the practice. I'm sorry. Ok? I'm sorry. I can think of a million stupid things I could do, and saying what I said to you isn't even on the list because it's just that stupid. It's beyond comprehension. I just don't want to get too close to anyone anymore, because it seems like I've lost everyone and everything I've ever loved. Except you."

Luke whistled. "You should do that more often. You're good at that. I guess my problem is completely the opposite. I worry about you because I love you, and I need you. I need you to love me back right now. I need to know that I belong somewhere."

"Luke, why-"

"No!" he snapped, a wall closing inside of him. "I just can't tell you. Please, please don't ask me again."

So instead of asking she embraced him. As his arms enfolded her, she realized how long it had been since she had opened up to anyone. The last person she had really talked to was Han.

Han.

She couldn't think about him right now. She tightened her grip on Luke and looked up at him, to find him staring at her with a curious sadness in his eyes. Her face tilted towards his and their lips met and she melted. She was no longer the strong diplomat, trying to keep

hurt from everyone. She was just a girl who needed love.

Luke didn't know what had happened. A fight, an apology, now a kiss? It was everything he had dreamed of. He could feel her urgency, could feel how much she needed him. But she didn't. She needed someone, anyone, but she didn't want him. She wanted Han. Slowly, he pulled away. It was almost unbearable, but he held her at arm's length. There were tears in her eyes, and he could feel them pricking in his too.

"I love you," he said. She took a shaky breath, but he put a finger over her lips, silencing her. "And I understand. I'll find him for you."

"Luke--"

"I'll find him for you because I love you. I want you to be happy." Noble words, but his heart broke to say them.

"I love you too. Luke, I'm so sorry."

"Don't be." He smiled weakly. "You can't change your destiny any more than I can change mine."

"So, what do we do now?"

"I don't know. Stay friends, I hope. You've kissed me before because of Han and that didn't change anything." He smiled at her, totally open and unjudging. She smiled back.

"I think I will go for that drink now, if you're feeling up to it."

He offered her his arm. "Princess, I would love too."

End
file.